2: MacDonald S-4 (no date) 1946 EK1 Austria EK1

In any case, the extent of clerical influence among the peasantry can easily be overestimated. The Austrians were not prone to take their religious life too seriously; and attempts made by the Church to extend its influence outside purely religious matters were not regarded with approval.[1] Anti-clericalism had its roots far back in the past, and had antedated by many decades the challenge of the socialists and the emergence of the Nazi party.

But if the clericalism of the conservative peasantry can easily be overestimated, so can the anti-clericalism of the Social Democrats. It is true that the party were prepared to fight what may be termed 'political Catholicism' because this was considered to be a force dangerous to the party.[2] But the Free Thinkers, who were actively hostile to the Church, were very small in number, and were strongly discouraged in their activities by Bauer, Renner, and most of the other leaders.[3] And, while it is true that the rank and file of the party were passively hostile to the Church, or at least, indifferent to its claims, certain leaders, as Ellenbogen and Leuthner, stated unequivocally that they considered this a source of weakness rather than of strength, to the party, and were anxious to see a revival of religion in the ranks of the Social Democrats.[4]

[1] On 20 October 1931, for instance, the *Neue Freie Presse* drew attention to the big peasant meeting, 4,000 strong, which had taken place at S. Johann im Pongau, and remarked that the peasants had demonstrated 'nicht nur gegen die Regierung u. die Parteipolitik, sondern auch gegen die politisierenden Geistlichen'.

[2] See the report prepared by the party executive for the Party Conference at Linz in 1926: 'Die römische Kirche übt ihre grosse Macht über die Seelen der breiten Massen, die ihrer Klassenlage nach, zu der Arbeiterklasse gehören, dazu aus, um sie von der Teilnahme an dem Befreiungskampf der Arbeiterklasse fernzuhalten, u. diese Massen in der Gefolgschaft bürgerlicher Parteien zu erhalten. . . . Dadurch stützt die römische Kirche die Herrschaft der Bourgeoisie.'

[3] Speech by Renner at the 1925 Social Democratic Party Conference, when the whole question was discussed: 'Ich möchte aber das eine betonen: es ist auch in dem Staat nicht Sache der Sozialdemokratie Partei, Religion u. Kirche zu bekämpfen.'

[4] Speech by Leuthner at the 1926 Party Conference: 'Im tiefsten Grund entstehen Religionen aus dem eingebornen, ewigen, unsterblichen u. durch nichts zu unterdrückenden Drang des gesamten Menschheitsgeschlechtes nach Erklärung der letzten Ursachen der Dinge.' He registered a strong protest against the attempt of the Free Thinkers to make acceptance of their creed the *sine qua non* of socialism. Cf. with speech of Preis: 'Seine Apostel'